



Consumer Newsline

A monthly news report provided by PIAVADC and your insurance agent

Child Safety Advocates Persevere

A recent national newspaper headline read "Driven to make cars safer for kids." The news story told of an individual who, after being car-jacked and locked in the trunk of her car, led a campaign to make inside trunk lock releases a reality. The improvement has already been credited with saving lives.

Aggressive campaign

Janette Fennell's effort to have inside trunk releases installed in every new automobile was not without its roadblocks and setbacks. She launched her campaign by researching the subject and writing to the CEO of every major automaker. When this initial effort failed to produce results, Ms. Fennell lobbied Congress and officials of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Her efforts succeeded in 2000, when the NHTSA issued a rule requiring inside trunk releases in every new car with a trunk by September 2001.

After winning the battle for inside trunk releases, Ms. Fennell switched her interests to being an advocate for child safety issues. She and others are lobbying for improvements in automobile window switches and backup warning systems to avoid back-over accidents.

New causes

Kids and Cars, a Kansas-based organization, says that since 1990, at least 26 children have been killed and at least 26 injured, when auto power

windows closed on them. The problem reportedly is rocker or toggle switches that are pushed down to close a window. To prevent operation should the switch be leaned on by a child, installation of a pull-up lever is recommended. Automakers in Europe and Asia already employ pull-up switches, while American automakers use a combination of pull-up and lever switches.



Recent trends of child fatalities when left unattended in or around motor vehicles are disturbing. In 2000, 79 were killed; in 2001, 104 died; in 2002, 113 were victims, and records for mid-year 2003 showed 78 child fatalities.

Statistics over the past five years documenting child fatalities involving a motor vehicle are revealing: 36.7% were left in a car in hot weather; 32.1% were backed over by a car; 11.3% other death; 10.1% vehicle put in motion by child; 3.9% trunk entrapment; 3.1% fire inside

vehicle, and 3% power accessory strangulation.

Auto childproofing

We often think of child-proofing our homes to prevent accidents involving toddlers and other children – using the same mentality to child-proof your vehicle also makes good safety sense.

Young females justify speeding

A national survey of U.S. drivers conducted by Hartford Financial Services Group found that young women have far more liberal views of breaking posted speed limits than that of their male counterparts. The survey reported that 56 percent of women between the ages of 18-24 think it's perfectly alright to drive 10 mph over the posted limit. Only 46 percent of young males feel the same way.

During the most recent three-year period, 45 percent of young female drivers reported being in an accident compared to young male drivers at 33 percent.

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